

"It just seemed easier not to allow myself to hurt or remember. I had too many things to do after my husband died. I had too many responsibilities. I thought it would just be better to bury the pain, but it only came back stronger."

The death of someone close to you often leaves a variety of strong emotions, unresolved issues, and uncertainties about how to cope. Feelings of frustration or guilt may cause caregivers to question if they did enough or gave enough.

Recognize Strong Feelings

These are normal emotions

- Guilt
- Shock
- Frustration
- Fear
- Sadness
- Relief
- Anger

Praise Yourself

The demands, risks, and pressures of providing care to a dependent family member may be more than you expected. Praise yourself for what you have been able to do.

Allow Yourself to Grieve

Each person reacts to a loss in her own way. Death sometimes is a relief or release for caregivers. Think of moving through your grief, rather than getting over the loss.

Recognize Changes in Relationships

Caregiving can bring to the surface many different emotions and feelings toward the care receiver. You may have experienced a peaceful relationship, or you have had a strained relationship. You cannot change the past. Remember that you did the best you could.

- Forgive yourself and others.
- Remember the good times.
- Accept your feelings.
- Expect some loneliness.
- Allow time for grieving.

Notes: _____

Find Help

- Talk to family and friends.
- Find someone who will listen.
- Consider a bereavement group.
- Seek professional help if needed.

Adjust to Your Loss

The death of someone close leaves a void in life. Longtime friends and family members can be important, but making new friends is also important. Your world has changed, and your life will never be quite the same. Try to reach out, even when you feel incapable of doing anything extra.

Action: How Do You Feel?

Check the feelings that seem unresolved for you.

____ Frustration ____ Anger
____ Guilt ____ Aloneness
____ Loss ____ Relief

List other feelings you are having:

Have you:

- Found a listener?
- Talked about your feelings?
- Allowed time for grieving?
- Praised yourself for doing the best you could?

"Honor your past, celebrate your present, and design your future."

-Frederic Hudson

Notes: _____

Adapted from:

After the Death by Jeanne Snyder, Ann Marie Marshall, and Joan Blaser

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This tip sheet is part of a series:

Caregiving Relationships: For People Who Care for Adults

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Issued in furtherance of cooperative Extension Service work, Acts of May 8 and June 20, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunity in programs and employment.

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Updated 2019